



Sun City, South Africa | 19 May 2025

## HERO MOTOSPORTS TEAM RALLY OFF TO A SOLID START AT THE SOUTH AFRICAN SAFARI RALLY 2025

**Hero MotoSports Team Rally**, the motorsport team of the world's largest manufacturer of motorcycles and scooters - **Hero MotoCorp**, kicked off its campaign for the third round of the FIM World Rally-Raid Championship (W2RC) 2025 – the South African Safari Rally.

Team Hero is represented in this rally by three riders: Ross Branch and Nacho Cornejo in the premier Rally GP class, and the team's latest recruit, Tobias Ebster, competing in the Rally 2 category. The rally flagged off with a short 9 km Prologue that saw Tobias Ebster, Ross Branch and Nacho Cornejo crossing the finish line with the 8th, 9th and 14th overall fastest times respectively. Meanwhile, Tobias, the current Rally 2 championship leader, finished with the 3rd fastest time in his category, earning himself a favourable starting position for tomorrow's first official stage.





Branch, the reigning 2024 FIM World Champion and a national icon in Southern Africa, is racing on a very familiar terrain. Fondly known as the “Kalahari Ferrari,” the Botswanan hero who hails from his country capital, Gaborone, is determined to recover valuable time and points in his home race after a tough start to the season.

The Chilean star Nacho has been showing a good rhythm since the start of the season. He has shown solid performances in the first two rounds of the season and continues to be a dependable part of the team. The fresh young Austrian talent, Tobias has settled into the team really well and the entire squad is looking forward to building on his strong start and is expecting good results ahead.

The South African Safari Rally 2025 flagged off with a gripping Prologue stage today. Making its debut on the W2RC calendar, the rally marks the return of international rally-raid racing to South Africa after more than three decades, since the 1992 Paris–Cape Town Dakar. A total of 95 vehicles made it to the start line of the South African Safari Rally 2025. 41 of these are FIM riders, featuring 9 top-tier riders in the Rally GP class, and another 28 competing in Rally 2.

Based out of Sun City, an iconic resort 140 km from Johannesburg, this brand-new rally will span 2,641 km over five demanding stages, including 1,222 km against the clock, and a marathon stage deep into the wild Savannah. The terrain is challenging, with a mix of high-speed stretches and tricky navigation.



Tomorrow's Stage 1 kicks off in Lichtenburg, around 200 km west of Sun City, plunging competitors straight into the heart of South African cross-country terrain. Known for its mix of agricultural tracks, sandy stretches, and open bushveld, this stage is as unpredictable as it is demanding. The stage will set the tone for the week ahead, testing both precision and pace right from the first flag drop. It's a crucial day to build momentum — especially for local favourites like Ross Branch who are looking to make their mark on the familiar terrain.



**Wolfgang Fischer, Team Manager, Hero MotoSports Team Rally:**

*"South Africa is a new adventure and a fresh challenge for everyone. The people and the organisers have welcomed us with such warmth — it's been wonderful to see this beautiful country and to have the race HQ set in the stunning Sun City. We've had a few days of preparation here, and we're really looking forward to a great race. The rally itself is quite different — racing through the bush, surrounded by wild animals, thorns, and rugged terrain. It's raw and exciting. The team is in good spirits, and we're especially proud to have Ross Branch here with his #1 plate after winning the World Championship last year. Nacho continues to be one of our most consistent and reliable riders, always bringing strength to the team."*

*"We're also very happy to welcome Tobias Ebster as the newest member of the Hero MotoSports family. He's a young and talented rider, currently leading the Rally 2 championship after two rounds. We're excited about the journey ahead with him and are building toward something strong. At the same time, we've said goodbye to Sebastian Bühler (Basti), who has chosen to take a different path in life and step away from racing for now."*

**Ross Branch, Rider, Hero MotoSports Team Rally:**

*"The prologue is done here at the South African Safari Rally, and I had so much fun. It was super slippery in the beginning and caught me out on a couple of turns, but overall, it was a good day. I'm really looking forward to a great week of racing back at home. The fans out there are incredible, and it's so nice to be back on African soil. Can't wait for the rest of the rally."*

**Nacho Cornejo, Rider, Hero MotoSports Team Rally:**

*"We're done with the prologue, and I felt very good on the bike. It was quite loose out there, and I made a couple of mistakes on some turns. The result in the prologue isn't where we want to be, but there's a lot of racing ahead. We'll give our best over the next five days."*

**Tobias Ebster, Rider, Hero MotoSports Team Rally:**

*"The prologue is done — it was a short one, just 9 kilometers. I really had a lot of fun on the bike, even though I didn't get much time on it beforehand. I managed to finish in the top 5, and I'm super happy with that. It's definitely a good position to carry into the rest of the week. There were so many spectators — thank you all so much. It really means a lot to us riders. Now we look forward to tomorrow."*

**Provisional Rankings – Prologue (Overall)**

1.	Daniel Sanders	Redbull KTM Racing Team	07m 08s
2.	Tosha Schareina	Monster Energy Honda Team	+ 00m 04s
3.	Michael Docherty	BAS World KTM Team	+ 00m 08s
8.	<b>Tobias Ebster</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	<b>+ 00m 19s</b>
9.	<b>Ross Branch</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	<b>+ 00m 20s</b>
14.	<b>Nacho Cornejo</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	<b>+ 00m 37s</b>

**Provisional Rankings - Prologue (Rally 2 Class)**

1.	Michael Docherty	BAS World KTM Team	07m 16s
2.	Edgar Canet	Redbull KTM Racing Team	+ 00m 05s
3.	<b>Tobias Ebster</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	<b>+ 00m 11s</b>



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**For more information:**

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